



Department of Justice

United States Attorney A. Brian Albritton
Middle District of Florida

Tampa Orlando
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday - March 18, 2010
<http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/flm/pr>

Jacksonville Ocala Fort Myers
CONTACT: STEVE COLE
PHONE: (813) 274-6136
FAX: (813) 274-6300

PALMETTO PHYSICIAN PLEADS GUILTY TO ILLEGAL PRESCRIPTION DRUG AND MEDICARE FRAUD CONSPIRACIES

Tampa, Florida - United States Attorney A. Brian Albritton announces that Dr. Jeffrey Friedlander (age 50, of Palmetto) today pleaded guilty to conspiring to distribute and dispense numerous controlled substances--Oxycodone, Morphine, Hydrocodone, and Alprazolam--and also to conspiring to defraud Medicare. Friedlander faces a maximum penalty of twenty years in federal prison for the drug conspiracy and ten years for the fraud conspiracy.

According to the plea agreement, Friedlander was licensed to practice Internal Medicine, Neurology, Pain Management, and Vascular and Interventional Radiology in Florida. He practiced primarily out of a medical business known as "Neurology and Pain Center" (NPC), with clinics in Tampa, Sarasota, Lakeland, St. Petersburg, Jacksonville, and Orlando. Friedlander also was a participating physician in Medicare. He submitted claims for reimbursement for his services under Medicare Part B and wrote prescriptions for controlled substances for Medicare patients that were filled under Medicare Part D.

While operating the NPC, Friedlander allowed unauthorized and non-medical employees to prescribe controlled substances to patients by using blank prescription forms that he pre-signed. Prescriptions were issued without conducting adequate physical

exams, making proper diagnoses, or considering alternative treatment options, and often with the knowledge that the patients receiving the controlled substances were misusing or abusing them, asking for drugs to support their own addictions, or sharing or giving the controlled substances away to others. Undercover detectives with the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office were able to obtain prescriptions for controlled substances at NPC clinics on numerous occasions in 2008 and 2009 with little or no contact with Friedlander, no meaningful physical examination, no verification of their medical complaints, no diagnostic tests, no discussion of alternate treatment methods, no assessment of risk of abuse, no referrals for physical therapy or other alternative treatments, and no discussion of a treatment plan. Often, the detectives simply asked for particular types of drugs and were given prescriptions for those drugs, with no medical basis and even after making clear that they had shared or intended to share the drugs with others.

The plea agreement also states that, between 2005 and March 2009, Friedlander submitted false claims to Medicare for performing Paravertebral Facet Joint Block Injections, when such injections had not been performed or had been performed improperly, and when some of the injections had been performed by unlicensed non-medical persons outside Friedlander's supervision. Friedlander also submitted false claims to Medicare for office visits coded at the highest degree of complication and requiring detailed involvement by the treating physician, when, in reality, unlicensed, non-medical persons had performed limited office visits outside of Friedlander's supervision. Friedlander entered false information in patient files to support the false Medicare claims.

As part of the plea agreement, Friedlander has agreed to forfeit all assets and properties obtained and utilized during the conspiracies, including but not limited to his

DEA Controlled Substance Registrations, his Florida Medical License, and a money judgment in the amount of \$317,047.13--the gross proceeds traceable to Friedlander's Medicare Fraud conspiracy.

This case was investigated by the United States Department of Health & Human Services, Office of Inspector General; the United States Marshals Service; the Federal Bureau of Investigation; the Florida Department of Law Enforcement; the Florida Department of Health; the Florida Office of the Attorney General Medicaid Fraud Control Unit; the Florida Division of Fraud; and the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office.

It is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Kathy J.M. Peluso and Josie Thomas.